

"To promote understanding and appreciation of the religious and spiritual values which abide in the processes and relationships of agriculture and rural life; to define their significance and relate them to the Christian enterprise at home and abroad."

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RECONSTRUCTING RURAL LIFE IN CHINA

By Fu-liang Chang

An address given at a Christian Rural Fellowship luncheon meeting held in honor of Mr. Chang at the Parkside Hotel, New York, June 10, 1937.

It is a great pleasure to be here and to see some of my old friends. I wish that I had more time to be with you and take a more active part in this Christian Rural Fellowship, of which Mr. Reisner has kept us informed.

I hope you haven't been expecting a formal address from me today, as I would rather attempt a very informal talk. We will talk, you and I, about the problems of China, and if you have any questions, I should be very glad to have you put them to me, either here or later in conversation.

There are a number of live topics which today engage the deep interest of students, professors and many other groups in China. Foreign aggression is probably the most popular of these, but among the most thoughtful group, reconstruction is the subject of greatest interest. When we speak of reconstruction in China, we have in mind, of course, rural reconstruction. Eighty-five percent of the Chinese people are rural--that is, live in rural districts. Therefore, reconstruction applied to China must be rural. Anyone speaking in a practical way on rural reconstruction will meet with no argument and will have a large number of listeners. Men like Jimmy Yen have a large hearing in the country because an increasingly large group of people are interested in rural reconstruction. An evidence of this widespread interest is the fact that groups of students from Nanking, Shanghai, Peking, are willing to spend part of their vacations in the rural field. It is, in fact, more for their own good to know their own country.

We might ask the question: How much importance has the government placed on rural reconstruction? One of the governmental policies is how to

*Mr. Chang is Executive Director of the Rural Welfare Centers established by the National Economic Council of China in cooperation with the Kiangsi Provincial Government. Previously he had been Rural Secretary of the National Christian Council of China. He is also Chairman of the Kiangsi Christian Rural Service Union which is especially interested in the widely known "Lichwan Experiment." He is a graduate of the Yale Forestry School. At the time of the luncheon Mr. Chang had just completed a long tour of European countries studying village welfare work, under the auspices of the League of Nations and with its financial help. During his brief stay in the United States, Mr. Chang had time only to visit the T.V.A.

Mr. Chang was introduced at the luncheon by Dr. E. C. Lobenstine, who was for many years a Secretary of the National Christian Council of China, and was closely associated with Mr. Chang when he was N.C.C. Rural Secretary.

cater to the needs of the farmer--how to teach him better methods of agriculture, how to extend improved cotton seeds and silk worm eggs, how to use artificial fertilizers, and how to produce better wood oil--in short, all the things which will benefit the farmer. Another need is to provide better means of communication, not necessarily the kind of communication New York has today, but efficient enough to permit distribution of agricultural produce.

If we look into the Christian movement in China we find what Dr. Lobenstein has said in introducing me today very true. The significance of it is that the Christian church has taken rural reconstruction very seriously. Madame Chiang-Kai-Shek in one of her interviews said that the church people should participate not only actively but vitally in rural reconstruction--and this participation will be not only for the good of the people, but it will also react to the advantage of the church itself.

When we look into the history of the Christian movement in China, we find there pioneering efforts in education, in science, in medicine, and in welfare work for men, women and children. Those pages of the history were gloriously written by the work and lives of Christian men and women, and we are proud of them. Advance in these fields in China was largely due to the initiative of the Christian movement. In 1926-1927 many of the Chinese people felt that much of this work should cease to be known only as "Christian" and should be considered "Chinese" instead. Some of the missionaries resented this attitude. A bishop asked me why the Chinese students felt as they did toward the Christian label, when the Christian movement had given them so much. My answer was that when the Christian church started its work in these fields, it was looking forward to this very day. They pioneered but their efforts were directed toward the time when the Chinese people and the Chinese government could take over the work. Every new movement has its privilege and has its price. The National government is now able to be responsible for some of this work, but the Christian movement should not be satisfied with that alone. It should move on into new fields of pioneering.

In an address which Madame Chiang-Kai-Shek made to the Biennial Meeting of the National Christian Council in May she said that the Chinese government coveted very much the cooperation of the Chinese church, and that in fact the government counted on the church's help in the New Life Movement and in the training of women. For example in Kiangsi there is a three-fold cooperation in connection with the training of women between the provincial government, church and social organizations and the New Life Movement.

Before I go further I will try to tell you what we have been trying to do for the last three or more years in Kiangsi. I shall tell you of the work in Kiangsi Province started by the National Economic Council of the Chinese government. In the work of suppression of communists in the territories occupied by the communists, Generalissimo Chiang-Kai-Shek decided on a new policy of great significance--a policy of peaceful education and welfare work. This policy was put into effect by starting cooperative societies, agricultural improvement, a health program, an educational campaign and relief work, as well as home industries. Reconstruction of the whole rural life is the climax of all these different lines of improvement. Let me show you a map of Kiangsi. These red lines indicate highways. From Nanchang, the capital of Kiangsi, we can reach six provinces. With such improved means of communication we can travel from place to place quickly. When the late Dr. Butterfield spoke of the "Rural Service Community" some years ago, he included in the concept formal, organized religion. It would not be possible to include organized religion in a government enterprise. However, we have everything else that Dr. Butterfield mentioned, and on top of that we have government.

We have ten Rural Welfare Centers. In each center we have five lines of activity. The first of these is Education. We have elementary schools, social education, and classes of home economics for women--in short, we try to provide an all-inclusive education for life.

The second line of activity is Health, and this includes a rural clinic, isolation hospital, sanitation work and health education. Each welfare center has a doctor, an assistant and a mid-wife.

The third line is Cooperatives. We have formed cooperative societies for rural credit, marketing, production, warehouse, etc. The Provincial Commission of Cooperatives sends two of its workers to each Welfare Center. When our cooperatives are organized, the Provincial Commission gives them recognition and financial help.

Agriculture is the fourth line of activity. Our workers go to the farmers as well as having them come to the center, and they stress improved seeds, better breed of pigs, poultry, gardening and improved cotton.

And lastly, we have Home Industry. Weaving is one of these. I have with me here a sample of cloth made from Ramie or "China grass" which is produced in many of the provinces. We have devised chemical treatment of raw material and better methods of weaving. It is as good as Irish linen. It will provide a new source of income for the farmer.

We have then these five lines of activity: education, health, cooperatives, agriculture and home industry. We have a secretary in charge of all the five lines and also of the special workers so that in each welfare center they can make an organized, concerted impact upon the whole community. The Provincial government has also appointed the secretary as the administrative head of the district in which the welfare center is located. The special workers in the different departments are sent from the Provincial government, and they are provincial government officials working for social welfare. We believe that certain things cannot be done by educational persuasion alone; some authority is necessary. The efficacy of government authority is evidenced in the control of the use of opium, in vaccination for small pox, and in compulsory education.

You might ask: What is the main objective of our work? We have two or three main objectives besides a number of other minor ones. In the first place we want the people to organize themselves, and we want to help them to do this. Chinese farmers, like farmers everywhere, are individualistic. We want them to cooperate, to work together. The small farmer can't compete with mass production--he won't have a show, but if all the small farmers will work together, they will have the same advantage as the big producer. We want them to work together, not simply for the purposes of production, but we want them to have self-realization. We want them to do as much as possible for themselves.

In a sense our centers are "people's universities." We have farmers' institutes, training for cooperative members, training for village elders, for mothers, and for all kinds of people. The center revolves about training for the people. Our main progress has been along these lines.

As you know, there is a large population in China, and there is a great deal of poverty. We have no one solution for these problems but we are cooperating in all possible ways in order to meet them. I am glad to have had these six months in Europe to get new ideas which are suggestive and helpful to our work.

But let us come back now to the Christian church, because that is where

my heart is. There are three ways in which the Christian church can help the rural movement in China. I thoroughly believe this three-fold program for the Christian rural reconstruction movement to be sound. I believe, first, that the Christian movement must serve the farmer, not in a half-hearted way, but by giving us some of the best missionaries and some of the best Chinese workers. You have given us the best in educational institutions and hospitals. Why can't you give us some similar service in the rural movement? We have organized regional rural service unions in which we want doctors, agriculturists, educators, specialists in home economics and recreation.

In the second place the Christian movement can carry on more experiments in different parts of China. We should have two or three first grade rural experiments with Christian bias and Christian ideals adequately supported with money and men. We can make them the research bureaus and experiment stations for the whole Christian movement in China.

Lastly the Christian movement has always supported the National Christian Council as the clearing house of information. Its rural secretary can approve, adapt and circulate new ideas. There are great possibilities of co-ordination there.

When I was in Europe I visited a small place, Liskov, in Poland. The priest there began his work in 1900. It was a poverty-stricken place and the people were little better than slaves. No meetings were allowed. Today that parish is a center of cooperation. There are twenty-seven cooperative organizations and social institutes. It is a most remarkable work. The pastor found that he couldn't do his own ordinary work so he began something new.

In Croatian parts of Jugo-Slavia I found the people more interested in political liberty. While there, I attended a Sunday service and saw a native wedding. The people were poor but proud of their culture and wore their native costumes. The Catholic priest, the richest man in the district, was more interested in dogma than in life. Immediately after the service the people congregated in a shed to talk about the killing of six Croatian peasants by the police. The spirit of the church here was in sharp contrast to the spirit of Liskov. Which is better? You can help us. Whither the Christian church in China?

"Welfare workers from outside can only introduce new ideas and ideals, inspire new confidences in and among the people, demonstrate new methods and seek and create new opportunities for training local leadership. Life, even the New Life, must come from within the people themselves. Our main task is to release the emerging new life, called forth by the forces of the new day; though smothered under the heavy load of abject poverty, ambitionless ignorance, degrading disease and small loyalties, nevertheless it is latent in every tiller of the soil and in every rural community. FOR EVERY INDIFFERENT, IGNORANT AND DEBT-RIDDEN PEASANT THERE IS AN ENLIGHTENED AND WELL-TO-DO CITIZEN-FARMER UNDERNEATH; AND FOR EVERY, DIRTY, UNSANITARY AND POVERTY-STRICKEN VILLAGE THERE IS A POSSIBLE PARADISE ON EARTH. IN THIS FAITH WE HAVE DARED TO PRESS FORWARD TOWARDS THE GOAL, which the title of this bulletin implies."

Quoted from the Preface to Special Bulletin Number Two, entitled, NEW LIFE CENTERS IN RURAL KIANGSI, a report by Mr. F. L. Chang, Director of the Kiangsi Rural Welfare Centers, National Economic Council, Nanchang, China, May 1936.